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The Public Fatality Reduction Initiative is designed to prevent all types of accidents and fatalities at Corps' recreation facilities. (Photo courtesy of the USACE National Operations Center for Water Safety)

Corps launches new public safety initiative

By Bernard Tate
Headquarters

...A boat beaches on a lake shore, engine running, weather covers zipped. Inside a family is dead from carbon monoxide poisoning.

...A youngster flying a tube kite behind a motorboat loses control of the awkward aircraft, crashes, and dies.

...A young man swimming with a life jacket decides he can swim better without it, takes it off, and drowns.

...A Hispanic man drowns because he could not read water safety warning signs.

...A swimmer who is good in a pool drowns because he is overwhelmed by cold, windy lake conditions.

These are just a few of the human stories behind the 162 public fatalities that occurred at U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' water projects in fiscal year 2005 (FY05).

The Corps is the nation's largest provider of water recreation — more than 361 million visitors in FY05, who spent more than 2 billion recreation hours at our water projects. Although the Corps' public fatality rate is at an all-time low of .80 per million visitor-days of exposure, the Chief of Engineers has asked his Civil Works staff to drop it even lower.

"I'm strongly committed to reducing recreation related public accidents and fatalities at U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers projects, and have shared that commitment with the Chief of Staff of the Army," said Lt. Gen. Carl Strock.

Fatality reduction

That is the reason that the Public Fatality Reduction Initiative was launched on Sept. 15.

"This is a commitment by Lt. Gen. Strock to reduce all public fatalities on Corps projects," said Lynda Nutt, manager of the USACE National Operations Center for Water Safety. The initiative was a joint effort between Operations and the Office of Safety and Occupational Health. "With the bulk of those fatalities in water recreation, I know that means we have to really step up our water safety efforts."

"This is a challenging objective and its accomplishment will require your concerted effort to include strengthen command and leader emphasis, resources, and support for visitor safety education and outreach," said Strock in his memorandum to the field.

Operating from a baseline average of 168 public deaths per year (the average of all public deaths in the Corps from FY02 to FY05), the Public Fatality Reduction Initiative encourages reduction of those deaths by 40 percent — beginning with a 28 percent reduction in FY07, with the remaining 12 percent

New Orleans looking for a few good people

*Make History in New Orleans,
Make a Difference for America*

That is the catch phrase for a campaign to encourage U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees to check out Corps job opportunities in New Orleans.

The Gulf Coast is rebounding after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and the Corps is working hard on its reconstruction program to help the area return to its traditional way of life.

Task Force Hope, the Hurricane Protection Office, and New Orleans District through its Protection Restoration Office are seeking people with talent, ability, vision, and dedication.

In the new brochure and poster that is being distributed Corps-wide, employees are encouraged to check out career options in a city that is often called the *Jewel of the South*, the *Big Easy*, and the *Crescent City*. The brochure promotes New Orleans as one of the most beautiful and interesting places in America, renowned for its unique culture and cuisine, and the home of the Mardi Gras and the French Quarter.

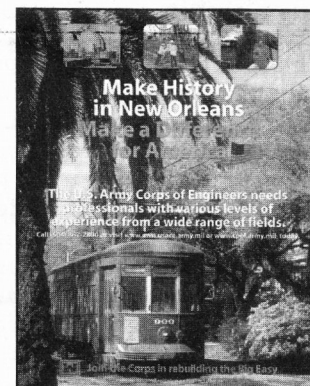
But the city offers much more for Corps employees who want to make a difference.

In one of the largest public works project in American history, the Corps is restoring, repairing and improving the hurricane protection system of southeast Louisiana.

"I can't promise you fame or glory, but I can guarantee you the satisfaction of being part of something bigger than yourself, of truly making a difference," said Lt. Gen. Carl Strock, the Chief of Engineers.

And while helping to rebuild New Orleans, potential employees will have the opportunity for promotion and eligibility for higher-level positions throughout the Corps, and "return rights" to the position they left.

Interested employees should call (504) 862-2800 or visit www.mvn.usace.army.mil or www.cpol.army.mil or www.usajobs.gov



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Insights

Everyone must face grief in their life

Article by Col. Sherrill Munn
Chaplain, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Artwork by Jan Fitzgerald
HECSA

A number of situations in the USACE family in the past year have resulted in many people suffering considerable grief. These events range from the loss of homes in Hurricane Katrina, to the death of employees and family members, to serious illness.

Grief is intense emotional suffering caused by a loss, and those losses can take many forms. When we think of grief, we often think of the loss of a loved one. However, we also grieve over financial losses, separation and divorce, loss of jobs, end of careers, loss of freedom and control, and any other loss that is significant to us. Grief can also recur from losses in the past, such as birthdays, anniversaries, and holidays.

With the major holidays of Thanksgiving and Christmas coming up, I thought it might be good to look at how to deal with grief in healthy, healing ways. I am not giving you new and unique approaches to grief. These are all tried-and-true ways of dealing with grief that come from life experiences and are used by counselors everywhere.

Unavoidable

The first thing that is important to know about grief is that you cannot avoid it if you suffer a major loss. Grief is part of the healing process that is necessary to recover from a major loss.

Therefore, allow yourself to grieve. Do not give into the myth that grieving feeds and prolongs the pain. You will feel the anguish of the loss. Allow that to happen and do not suppress it.

Grief is not one feeling. It is complex and layered with many feelings happening at once. You may feel shock and denial at first. Then sorrow, anger, even guilt. You will probably suffer some form of depression. Ultimately, your grief should lead you to acceptance of the loss.

Denial

We must be careful about denial. Denial can be a coping mechanism that affects us subtly. We can sometimes refuse to acknowledge the loss and pain and attempt to escape by suppressing it. Failing to accept the loss and its disruption in our life can result in additional problems. Suppressing the pain may result in sleep disorders, increase in alcohol consumption, or drug use (I'm not talking about only illicit drugs, but also over-the-counter and prescription medications like sleeping pills or stimulants), eating disorders, anxiety, outbursts of anger, hyperactivity, and reducing the pain to superficial platitudes ("At least she didn't suffer long").

Symptoms

Unexpressed sorrow often comes out in physical symptoms, depression, and inhibition of healthy

emotions like love and joy. We are whole human beings and cannot shut down in one area of our lives without affecting others. Allowing yourself to feel the pain and expressing your feelings will allow you to heal and feel more alive.

Coping

When you are suffering from a loss and grieving, monitor yourself. If you see any of these negative things happening, especially if they continue over time, then get help. Talk to a counselor or pastor. Seek positive ways to express your grief. Exercise is a good way to get rid of that pent-up energy you often feel when grieving and helps prevent or lessen depression and protect against physical problems. It can also help with eating and sleep problems.

Turn your grief into helping others; volunteer for good causes in your church, community or organizations. You can turn your grief into positive contributions. The TV show, "America's Most Wanted," developed from the grief of parents who lost a child to violent crime. Use your grief to understand how important life is and the people in your life.

Guilt

The second thing I want to address when dealing with grief is guilt. When we suffer a major loss, we often go through periods of feeling guilty. It certainly happens in the case of divorce, but can also happen with the death of a loved one and other circumstances.

We cannot deny such feelings, but we do need to analyze them and sort out responsibility. Is the guilt founded or not: real or false? Often such guilt comes from wondering, "Did I miss something? Could I have done something differently?" Sometimes it comes from losing a loved one with unfinished business between the two of you, such as an ongoing dispute.

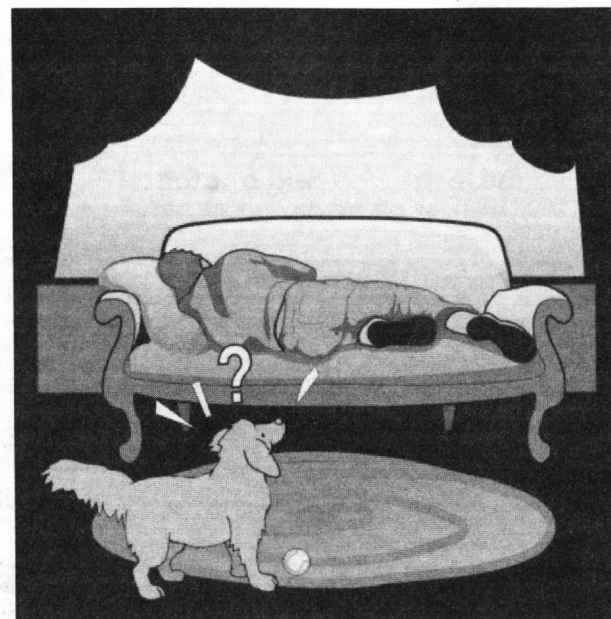
I know of a very good counselor, a psychiatrist, who was working with the parents of a child who had attempted suicide. They were asking themselves, "Was it something we did?" In other words, "Are we good parents?" The counselor responded, "Did you do anything deliberately to hurt your son?" That was a powerful question because it showed that the guilt they were feeling was false and self-imposed.

On the other hand, if guilt is real, then you make amends as far as possible. If you can no longer make amends with a person who is gone, then turn to your religious faith, if you have one. Accept God's forgiveness and atonement. If you do not have a religious faith, then you will need to do the difficult task of forgiving yourself.

In any case, it is important to move on beyond the guilt.

Friends

The third part of getting through grief I want to emphasize is the importance of friends. Seek the



support of friends. Friendship is important because it affirms we are not abandoned and alone. Friends give us a sense of companionship and affirm to us that good things still take place in our lives despite the magnitude of the loss. They bring balance to our lives and are willing to listen non-judgmentally. Reach out to friends and do not withdraw from them. You need them as part of the healing process.

Counseling

Fourth, do not be afraid to go to a counselor or pastor if you find it difficult to cope with the grief or if the negative emotions that we discussed earlier persist. Remember that friends and family members can give support, but not therapy. They are too enmeshed with you and their own grief to give you the objective reality checks you need. Also, see a physician and make sure that you maintain physical well-being as well as working out your emotional and psychological healing.

Finally, look for those things in your life that give you hope and renewal. What is it in your life right now that has meaning or could have meaning for you? Who do you care about deeply? Let the answers to these questions refocus your life toward a hopeful future instead of the painful past.

Inner dialog

Consider what you are reflecting upon. What are you telling yourself? We all have an inner dialog. Are the messages you are giving yourself negative or positive? Work on positive, hopeful messages around the good things that remain in your life or could be part of your life. Look for beauty in the world, use prayer and meditation, accept God's love for you. A sense of God's presence and love can have a powerfully healing affect. Know that the time will come when you can let go of the past.

A turning point will come when life will begin to be less painful. When we do begin to look for beauty in the world, for those things that bring meaning into our lives, when we begin to consider the friends we have and those special people we love, when we can sense God's love for us, then we can see we do have much to be thankful for even when grieving a loss.

(The opinions expressed in this article are those of the writer and do not reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Department of the Army, the Department of Defense, or the U.S. government.)



'Oct. Nightmare' tests Buffalo District

Article and Photo
By Bruce Sanders
Buffalo District

Many names were given to the lake effect storm that struck on Oct. 12, from "October Surprise" to "October Nightmare." Perhaps *The Buffalo News* reporter Phil Fairbanks said it best — "Years from now, people will remember it as the night the trees wept."

Western New Yorkers are a hardy lot. They are not daunted by forecasts of snowfalls that would bring other areas of the country to their knees. They know how to deal with it. Four wheel drive vehicles abound; so do snow blowers of every size, brand, and horsepower. During a particularly vicious blizzard in late January 1985, Buffalo's irascible mayor Jimmy Griffin gave this advice: "Stay home. Enjoy your family. Watch Channel 7, and get a six-pack."

But this October storm would test the mettle of even the hardest.

D-Day

For meteorologists of the National Weather Service, the storm was no surprise. Hours before the first flakes fell on Oct. 12, they saw data that forecast an event likely to cause widespread damage. Lake Erie was warm; the air temperature was cold, and getting colder. It was the classic lake effect machine we know so well.

Emergency responders across four counties were alerted but, at that point, no one, not even the experts, could foresee just how big the monster would grow.

Later in the day, the weather service issued a bulletin: "Historic snowfall may be in store overnight."

Historic indeed. Weather records have been kept for Western New York since 1870, and never had an event of such magnitude hit in early October. By the time the snow stopped, nearly two feet smothered the area.

It was heavy, wet snow. Trees still carried their leaves, changing from summer to autumn colors. These leaves would be a death sentence for thousands of trees, their limbs snapping and shattering under the weight. In their death throes, the trees brought down power lines, telephone lines, and cable television lines.

As power grids failed, so did a large part of the water supply system for Erie County. Anything unlucky enough to be under the trees, such as vehicles, garages, and houses, was crushed or damaged. A man shoveling snow was killed by a snow-laden branch. Awnings and flat roofs sagged and buckled.

The surreal atmosphere of the nighttime snowfall was heightened by thunder and lightning, for this was a "thunder snow," a snowstorm that brews up like a thunderstorm, complete with lightning and heavy downpours, except in this case the downpour was snow.

"All the ingredients came together at the wrong place and time," said Tom Niziol of the National Weather Service.



The surprise snow storm in October caused widespread damage in Western New York State.

D-Day Plus One

People emerged from their homes in disbelief. They wandered the early morning streets on Oct. 13 like haggard soldiers emerging from a bunker after a heavy artillery barrage. Downed power lines and trees were everywhere.

"This is going to change the look and landscape of the city for 20 years," Joseph Giambra, Buffalo Public Works Commissioner. "Certain neighborhoods just aren't going to look the same."

Roads were impassible. All schools, many businesses, places of worship, and community organizations were closed. Grocery stores and supermarkets were besieged. Portable generators flew off the shelves to keep furnaces and sump pumps going and basements from flooding. Many lost the battle. One radio station announced that the nearest portable generators for sale were in Ashtabula, Ohio, 138 miles away.

As the pale morning light grew into day, the full scope of the disaster slowly unfolded. Almost a million residents of the Niagara Frontier were without power. William Edwards, National Grid President said, "By any measure, it's the most significant storm damage we've ever experienced in Western New York, and that goes back well over 100 years."

People were cold. Particularly hard-hit were the old, the young, and the infirm. Not all had food, or flashlights, or battery-powered radios. Those needing electricity to power home medical equipment were in dire straits. Travel bans were imposed, but there weren't many places to go to.

Response

The response to this unprecedented disaster can be viewed on two levels — the individual and the institutional level.

On the individual level, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even strangers pitched in to help one another.

A man in Tonawanda had a large generator and shared power with his neighbors, while the neighbors did their part by walking to any gas stations that

had power to get the fuel required to keep the generator running.

People with chainsaws cleared debris from backyards, driveways, and sidewalks.

Those with power, heat, and food took in those who did not. My own household was augmented by my mother-in-law and a graduate student from the University at Buffalo.

Four-wheel-drive owners came forward to transport doctors and nurses, or deliver critical medical items to the homebound.

Buffalo District organized "Operation Good Neighbor" to match employees with needs with other employees who could help. One employee had a team show up at her house to help clear fallen trees, while another employee got help dealing with a flooded basement.

And then there were examples of American ingenuity. An employee at UPS found that a water pump that cooled a backup generator was failing. He used packed snow to cool the pump and keep the generator working.

Power inverters connected to vehicles were used to run sump pumps, and bilge pumps from boats were connected to 12 volt batteries to drain basements. Those with camping gear kept warm and cooked on propane stoves and barbecues.

The list goes on and on.

The cavalry arrives

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts its emergency response under two authorities — the Flood Control & Coastal Emergency Act, and the Stafford Disaster and Emergency Assistance Act.

Under the Flood Control & Coastal Emergency Act, the Corps provides disaster preparedness services and advanced planning to reduce the damage caused by an impending disaster.

Under the Stafford Act, the Corps supports the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the National Response Plan (NRP), which calls on 30 federal agencies to provide disaster relief and recovery.

Under the NRP, the Corps is the primary agency for planning, preparedness, and response under the Emergency Support Function (ESF) #3, Public Works & Engineering. This ESF provides lifesaving or life protecting assistance to augment efforts of the affected state(s) and local response efforts following a disaster.

Public Works and Engineering support includes technical advice and evaluations, engineering services, construction management and inspection, emergency contracting, providing emergency power, emergency repair of wastewater and solid waste facilities, and real estate support.

Buffalo District's Emergency Management Office, headed by Gary Shoffstall, and staffed by Debbie Lewandowski and Patrick Vanderbeck, was augmented by specialists in prime power, debris removal, and communications from Pittsburgh, Louisville, Mobile, and Baltimore districts, plus the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) from Fort Belvoir, Va.

Some remained in the district EOC, while others were at the Erie County Emergency Operations Center or a staging area at the Hamburg Fairgrounds. They worked with a wide range of teams from FEMA, Erie County, the National Guard, and the State of New York to get the impacted area back on its feet.

Rapid Response Team

Disaster assistance is what our response teams train for. One Rapid Response Team member, Joe Phelan, was on the beach in Mobile, Ala., with his girlfriend when he got the call to duty on his cell phone and drove 18 hours straight to get to Western New York.

And his story is not unusual. Uncommon dedication among emergency team members was common. When I interviewed the very tired Power Restoration Team at the fairgrounds, they exhibited enthusiasm that you cannot get by simply paying overtime. They live for the mission, and the mission means people.

Deputy District Commander Maj. R. Brian Phillips said, "Our goal is to help people. Not an abstract entity, but real people, like those at the Response to Love Center, a soup kitchen at St. Adalbert's Basilica on Buffalo's East Side. They had no power on Monday morning, Oct. 16, and there were tired, hungry people streaming in. At about 10 p.m. that day, a team from the Corps arrived and assessed what size generator was required. By 2 a.m. on Tuesday, the generator was installed and the soup kitchen was up and running."

Two weeks after the event, the storm-related death toll stands at 13. There are still people without power and telephone service, but that number is dropping. Debris removal will go on for months, as will rebuilding homes, businesses, and infrastructure. Reforestation will take many years. But Western New Yorkers are a resilient lot.

(Thanks to Phil Fairbanks and "The Buffalo News" for selected quotes.)

Iraqi workers in Gulf Region Division

'Our country must be one of laws...'

By Tom Clarkson
Gulf Region Division

"Our country must be one of laws," the Iraqi woman said fervently. "Good, strong, fair laws. Laws like we had from over 50 years ago. And then, with those as our base, we must have strong and enlightened leadership that will work to solidify us as a country whole, not a partitioned state."

These were the first words in interviews with two Iraqis who work for Gulf Region Division (GRD). They're not alone — about 1,650 Iraqis work for GRD in the International Zone, but even that doesn't tell the whole story. Virtually *all* aspects of construction throughout Iraq is done by Iraqis.

Some of these interviews were conducted in English, others in Arabic. But repeated efforts were made to capture what they wished to express. Before publication, they all reviewed the article to ensure that it accurately portrays what they wanted to say.

These are their stories and their opinions, in their own words, although we are publishing only their initials for security reasons.

EK, the woman quoted above, is a young lady of 26, an attorney with GRD's Office of Counsel.

"We must not lose sight of the value of our old laws

that pre-dated Saddam Hussein," EK continued. "All were treated equally under them — Sunni, Shiite, and Christians. We must not step backward as we toil to re-create our country."

With her larger view of Iraq's legal system, EK daily reviews Iraqi contracts according to Iraqi law, keeps her U.S. officemates current on new Iraqi law, provides legal translation of Iraqi government orders, deeds, notices, and contracts, and provides legal opinions on issues of Iraqi compensation or labor issues.

HE nods in agreement as EK speaks. She is an administrative assistant in GRD's Safety Office, and a 42-year-old mother of two. "Before Saddam, everyone in our country lived and labored in harmony," HE added. "I remember when a neighboring Christian family had a propane gas tank explode in their home. All of our community — Shiite, Sunni, and Christians — mourned their deaths and worked together to help surviving family members."

Like EK, HE's job is significant to the future Iraq. "In Iraq we have never had such individuals as Safety Officers," HE said. "Few precautions were taken in the workplace and, as a result, many workers each year have been unnecessarily injured and even killed. I hope I can help change this."

Among the duties she handles each day is transla-

tion for the U.S. members of her team, preparation of daily status reports from GRD assets countrywide, creation of bi-weekly situation reports, and attending weekly meetings with the commanding general when GRD's Safety Director is traveling.

Their work is dangerous in other ways as well, as the evening news reports every night. "These are some of the bravest folks I have ever known," said Maj. Gen. William McCoy, GRD's previous commander, in his farewell remarks. "Many must daily traverse their own personal gauntlet of terrorism, facing the potential of injury or death in order to come to work with us in the re-building of Iraq. In convoy security operations alone, to date, the vast majority of the 105 killed and 317 wounded have been Iraqi."

On their faces and through their words, the hope that EK and HE have for their country is obvious. But their fear for the present is equally apparent.

"We are both sad and afraid," said EK. "This sectarian violence is terrible. Too often this killing is revenge driven, and many of those responsible are from outside of our country that come here only to cause our country distress. We must take charge of our country's future. Iraqis have always taken care of our own; we must return, as a nation, to that standard."

Iraqi workers in Gulf Region North

'The work was pure engineering...'

By Polli Barnes Keller
Gulf Region North

SR had one brother murdered and a brother-in-law kidnapped and tortured for working for the Americans. SR (*initials only for security reasons*) narrowly escaped with his life. But he continues working for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in rebuilding his country.

Daily, Iraq is featured in western news media headlines. Reports of insurgents jam the news with doom and gloom. While the dangers are real and bad things do happen, stories of bravery and dedication to one's country are lost in the process.

Bricks and mortar may not be as exciting or as riveting as insurgents ambushing the innocent, but dedication and commitment to rebuilding a country, risking life and limb in doing, so is certainly worthy of headline news and the attention of the world.

Gulf Region North employs 53 Iraqi citizens working in many fields of expertise. From project managers to construction representatives, these citizens are working to rebuild their country and their future in spite of the dangers in doing so.

One such employee is SR, the deputy resident engineer for one of the Corps' resident offices. SR, an engineer by trade and a veteran of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, has journeyed through many heartbreaking moments in his life, yet he refuses to quit the mission and remains focused ensuring a better future for his children and grandchildren.

Witnessing the suffering and damage done to the Kuwaiti people cultivated SR's disappointment and hatred for the ruthless dictatorship of Saddam Hussein. But his hopes and dreams for a better Iraq were restored in 1990 as he watched U.S. forces invade Kuwait.

But these hopes and dreams would soon fade when Desert Storm ended and the U.S. embargo of Iraq began. More and more each day, the poor people felt the restrictions put on Iraq, while the Hussein regime grew in strength. SR was again filled with disappointment.

Eight years later, elated with joy, SR watched as American Soldiers entered Baghdad and toppled statues of Hussein. Within days, he and his elder brother stood in front of the Meridian Hotel in Baghdad offering their services to the Americans.

While working as a linguist for the U.S. Army Civil Military Operations Center in Mosul, SR received an opportunity to work with the 326th Engineering Battalion of the 101st Airborne Division. It was here he gained a great respect for the American Soldier. He saw Soldiers as symbols of a high standard of humanity. He witnessed their discipline and respect for their mission and for Iraq.

Having an engineering background, it wasn't long before the leaders of the 326th offered SR a position. The American Field Engineering Support Team (AFEST) opened the door for a new life.

The AFEST team, which trains Iraqi engineers to assess and estimate damage to buildings and facilities, worked with its counterpart, the Iraqi Field Engineering Support Team (IFEST) made up of local engineers, to make plans for all damaged buildings and facilities in Mosul and the surrounding northern provinces. SR was the first Iraqi engineer hired.

Within 18 months, the IFEST team possessed the expertise and capability to work on their own. The team covered most facilities in Mosul including hospitals, clinics, schools, police stations, courthouses, banks, electrical plants, water and irrigation stations, border facilities, grain silos, cement, textile and sugar factories, as well as oil deposits and refineries.

"The work was pure engineering, not mixed with any expectations or surprises," said SR. "The common theme was the good relationship with the U.S. and the mutual care and understanding on both official and personal categories."

Good things were happening with the reconstruction effort, but the security situation worsened day by day. The engineers began receiving threats. Realizing they had no protection, members of the team began to leave one by one for fear of losing their lives.

SR, the last engineer, moved his family three times to stay one step ahead of the insurgents. Finally, no

longer able to return to his office for fear of being seen, he decided to resign and the missions came to a standstill.

The Corps offered SR a position in a northern region where it was safer. It was clear that the Corps cared about the people of Iraq, so he accepted the position and immediately moved his family.

Unfortunately, the insurgents did not give up. Two months after moving his family to the north, SR's brother was murdered in front of an Internet café in Mosul. Still looking for information concerning SR's whereabouts, the insurgents kidnapped and tortured his 18-year-old brother-in-law. The young man escaped during the night and went into hiding in Baghdad.

Still, the insurgents did not stop. They went to SR's home and threatened his 72-year-old father. Swearing SR had left the country, the gentleman paid the criminals \$300,000 to ensure the safety of his son.

The stress caused the old man to suffer a heart attack and he died a few weeks later. Grief stricken and afraid, SR sent word to Baghdad for the brother-in-law to come north and live with his family.

Again they would be tormented. Information received from friends in Mosul led SR to evacuate his family to yet another area in the north. The insurgents knew of his location and were on their way.

During this time of fear and unrest, SR continued to work for the Corps. Today, he and his family are safe. He travels great distances at his own expense to keep the location of his family secret and to continue his mission.

Working in a safe area as the Deputy Resident Engineer, Rasheed wants to tell the public and the government officials that he is working with the Corps. His hope for the future is that the U.S. and Iraq stay in contact and have more interaction for the good of both countries.

He would like his people to participate in training, preferably in the U.S., so that his country can observe and learn the system of democracy and liberty where it all began; to see the place where freedom has a real meaning.

Iraqi workers in Gulf Region South

'I've seen my country torn apart...'

By Ken Holder
Gulf Region South

(The Iraqi Associates, called Iraqi Corps of Engineers (ICE) in Gulf Region South, work every day alongside their American counterparts to rebuild their nation. There are 123 Iraqi Associates in GRS. This is their story, but all names have been changed to protect them from harm.)

When Ali (first name only for security reasons) was a small boy growing up in Karbala he always enjoyed working with his hands. His earliest memories were of trying to build things and help his father repair their small shop. Later in school he found he enjoyed mathematics and when a teacher suggested he attend the university to become an engineer, he knew he'd found his calling.

After graduation and a tour in the Iraqi army Ali worked for several foreign and Iraqi firms. Following the fall of Saddam, he saw the work the Americans were doing for his country and he knew he wanted to be a part of reconstruction.

"I've seen my country be torn apart by war, invasion, and greed," said Ali. "I've seen how the people's needs were simply ignored by the former regime. No work was done than benefited the common people. That's why I became an engineer in the first place – I wanted to help people. When I saw what the Americans were doing I went to a job site and met some people who worked for the Corps. I gave them my CV (resume) and they hired me."

Ali says that under the previous regime people got work done through a system of patronage, graft, corruption, and greed. To get a road project built you

would have had to do something for Saddam that would have made him want to help you.

"It is hard for the average Iraqis to understand how Americans work," said Ali. "Before the overthrow of Saddam the important people got the work done that benefited them in some way. Under the Americans it is just the opposite. They ask the people to be a part of the process. They ask people what they need, and then those projects go to the top of the list."

With the small number of USACE employees in-country, the success or failure of the projects hinge on the work of the 123 Iraqi associates who check the construction sites and make sure work is progressing according to schedule and standard. These men and women undergo tremendous amounts of stress just to get to work each day, and they live in fear of being murdered for simply working for the Americans.

Hana, a female engineer who works for the Iraqi Associates, says it is something that she thinks about every day she comes to work and every day on her way home.

"It is a very dangerous job," says Hana. "I took the job because I have seen what you Americans were doing for us. I wanted to be a part of rebuilding my country. But there are very few people who know who I work for. Most of my family doesn't know that I work for Gulf Region South."

Hana says she has had a tough time trying to keep her employment with the Corps a secret and still being effective at her job.

"There are days when I cannot come to work," says Hana. "There are days when I must stay home for

my safety and for my family's safety. In my community rumors get started about who someone works for and then the next thing you know you could end up murdered. I am fortunate that my brother works for a security company that provides protection for foreigners working in Iraq. He tells me when it is not safe to come to work and when I should stay inside."

For most of the Iraqi Associates just getting to work is a challenge and comes with many perils.

"I have to go through several checkpoints to get to work," said Hana. "I don't worry much about coming to work because they are manned by Iraqi police. But if I miss my ride and have to go late from work I sometimes have to go through militia checkpoints and that can be very frightening. They ask many questions. When that happens I usually take a few days off."

The commander of Gulf Region South, Col. Gary Johnston, says that the ICE engineers are the future of the country and it is up to all GRS employees to bring them along as quickly as possible.

"We have to continue to stress capacity development," said Johnston. "We won't be here forever and the needs of these people are great. If we don't do everything in our power to teach them everything we know then the results of our work here will not last long. If we teach them proper safety and maintenance procedures we will leave a lasting and positive mark on this nation and on these people. Whenever I get the chance to talk to our Iraqi Associates I always make sure to drive home the point that we're here to help. This is their country and we're merely here to get them on their feet."

Iraqi workers in Gulf Region Central

'Insurgents won't discourage us...'

By Norris Jones
Gulf Region Central

Despite getting knocked down by back-to-back bomb blasts, Abdul (first name only for security reasons) still reported for duty. And when he arrived, his fellow workers at the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers got him to the hospital to have his cuts, black eye, and contusions treated.

Two months ago, Abdul, an engineer working for Gulf Region Central District, was in a taxi on the way to a project site in downtown Baghdad when an improvised explosive device detonated, killing a bystander and wounding several others. He was exiting the cab to provide first aid when a vehicle drove into the crowd and triggered a *second* explosion, killing at least a dozen more people.

"Despite that incident and many more every day, the insurgents aren't going to discourage us from doing the right thing for our country and our people," Abdul said. "Yes, it's a difficult time. But those in need are looking for help, and we're going to continue to do everything we can to offer it to them."

His team of 30 fellow Iraqi engineers are in charge of rebuilding water treatment plants, renovating hospitals and schools, installing new neighborhood electrical networks, replacing old sewer mains, and building new courthouses and fire stations.

"We need to keep the wheel of reconstruction moving to ensure basic essential services are restored in Iraq, defeating the insurgents' goal of demoralizing the residents here," said Abdul. "It's a noble cause, and by working shoulder-to-shoulder with the Americans, we'll accomplish the mission."

The 33-year-old has a masters degree in civil engineering and is working on a doctorate degree. His fellow Iraqi engineers have degrees in a variety of fields including structural engineering, mechanical engineering, and electrical engineering. And they're in the Red Zone every day visiting projects ensuring they're being done right.

Abdul started working for the coalition in 2003 as an interpreter, but when U.S. forces discovered he was an engineer they asked him to do a lot more than just translations. He was part of Task Force RIE (Restore Iraqi Electricity) and eventually got his job with the Corps.

Today he is Deputy Resident Engineer of Gulf Region Division Central District's International Zone office and his two favorite projects are Baghdad Central Train Station and Alwaiya Children's Hospital.

"Baghdad Train Station was my first huge project, a \$5.9 million contract," said Abdul. "We replaced all the electrical, water and sewer lines, repaired the roof, installed two new seven-passenger elevators, rehabilitated the restaurant, new fire alarm system, new entrance, new partitions, new windows, new bathrooms, refurbished the station's eight exterior platforms, put in two new 1.25mva generators, two 500-ton boilers, two air conditioning chillers, and added a VIP hotel with 13 rooms."

"The train station is where I learned the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers quality assurance responsibilities and the western way of overseeing construction," he continued. "It's been a great experience. Before our work there, the train station was notorious for non-functioning restrooms and a foul odor from sewage in the basement. I'm proud of our role to correct

these problems. That facility has the potential to generate a lot of jobs; it's important to this area."

Abdul says Alwaiya Children's Hospital, "touches your heart every time you walk through their door. It comes down to the basics of humanity and helping save people's lives. Doctors and nurses are using equipment that was not available two years ago."

That \$2.9 million project involves upgrading and modernizing a 217-bed facility including a new water purification system, new mechanical system (both air conditioning and heating), medical waste incinerator, oxygen plant and central vacuum system, nurse call system, intercom paging system, data communications network, new toilets, showers and sinks, new exhaust system to remove unhealthy air and odors, a new generator for emergency power, new lighting, and structural repair.

"This hospital takes care of the poorest in Baghdad," said Abdul. "The medical staff was working in miserable conditions. Newborns and young children were dying every day. We've made a difference and I'm pleased to be part of it. Alwaiya Children's Hospital is now providing health care at the same high standard as private hospitals here. It's great to see these youngsters benefiting from our efforts."

Maj. Robert Nash, officer in charge of GRC's International Zone office, said, "It is professional engineers like Abdul who will be in charge long after we've gone home. It's our goal to work ourselves out of a job as they march forward with the construction management techniques they're now using."

Nash's office is currently overseeing 135 projects worth more than \$500 million and most of that work is being done by his Iraqi staff.

Bronze sculpture honors Memphis hero

Article and Photo
By Jim Pogue
Memphis District

"We're here to honor the man...the hero...the legend."

With these words, Benny Lendermon, president of Memphis' Riverfront Development Corporation (RDC), opened the ceremonies on Oct. 19 to dedicate a new memorial to local hero Tom Lee.

About 200 people braved a cold, driving rain to hear about Lee and the effort to keep alive the memory of his heroism.

On May 8, 1925, Tom Lee rescued 32 people from the Mississippi River when the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers steamer *M.E. Norman* capsized and sank just south of Memphis. The boat carried a group of engineers and their families who were in Memphis for the Mid-South Society of Civil Engineers convention.

Lee, a levee worker, was returning from a job on the river in his small skiff, and he was the only witness to the sinking. Although he could not swim, Lee turned his boat around and worked until dark rescuing people from the deadly river currents that eventually claimed 23 people.

"The city rallied around a black man for the first time in history," Memphis City Council member Rickey Peete told the crowd.

In 1952, Memphis built a granite obelisk to honor Tom Lee, but it was

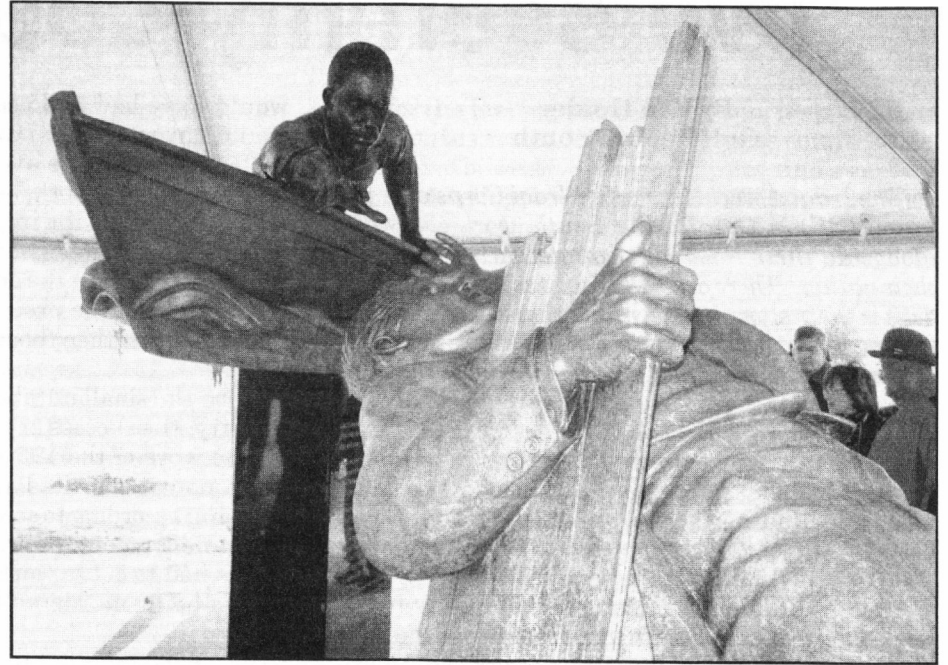
destroyed by a severe storm in 2003. Plans to dedicate an enhanced memorial had been under discussion for several years, and the storm damage to the obelisk coincided with the Riverfront Development Commission's (RDC) plan to begin work on a new memorial, and they set a timetable for the October dedication.

When local leaders chose the design for the new Tom Lee monument, they wanted to ensure that it was not abstract and that visitors, "...would not have to stand around and wonder what it was," said city council member Barbara Swearingen Holt, who helped lead the effort to establish the new memorial.

The RDC worked with the UrbanArt Commission to create and install the new Tom Lee Memorial in the riverfront park named for him. The RDC commissioned Wyoming artist David Alan Clark to design the new memorial, which portrays the spirit of Tom Lee.

Clark said that he and his wife did many hours of research on Tom Lee and his story before he submitted his winning design proposal for the monument. Clark's striking, evocative bronze sculpture portrays Lee in his small boat, pulling a drowning man from the water.

"If tested like Tom Lee, I hope we could all find the selflessness and courage that he did," Clark told the crowd. After the ceremony, he spoke of his inspiration for the memorial.



A bronze sculpture in Tom Lee Park in Memphis honors Lee's rescue of 32 people when the Corps' steamer *M.E. Norman* sank in 1925. Right, Tom Lee as he appeared in life. (Right photo courtesy of Memphis District)

"It was just the story of Tom Lee, someone who put others ahead of himself and come to their aid," Clark said. "It's a timeless and remarkable story. I hope future generations can learn, see, and understand. I hope my work can help them make a personal and visceral connection to the story."



HR Corner

New programs aid NSPS transition

The Department of Defense (DoD) recently launched two new self-service Human Resources programs for employees and supervisors. These tools will be useful in ensuring the successful transition to the National Security Personnel System (NSPS). My Biz and My Workplace provides U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employees on-line access to personnel information, 24 hours a day, seven days a week via CPOL (Civilian Personnel On-Line) at <http://cpol.army.mil/>

My Biz and *My Workplace* are changing the way employees and supervisors access personnel information about themselves and their staff members. Starting last June, employees and supervisors have been able to log-on to My Biz and My Workplace and access information stored in the Department of Defense Personnel Data System (DCPDS). Employees can update their personal information, and supervisors now have a tool available to view personnel data on their staff, which has been consolidated from various source documents at one location in My Workplace, directly from their desktops.

My Biz is an exciting new Web-based Oracle application that allows employees secure, real-time, on-line access to information from their official personnel records. Items that can be viewed include such fields as salary, benefits like Thrift Savings Amounts, Life & Health Insurance, appraisal and awards, performance evaluation data, current and past appointments, position data and other personal information.

My Biz supports other DoD crucial information programs such as the NSPS and the EEO Programs.

By using My Biz, employees can update personal information such as emergency contact home telephone number, e-mail address, disability, ethnicity, and race identification information. In addition, changes can also be made to the foreign language proficiency and education level information on file.

My Workplace was developed for the busy manager. It brings key information regarding all subordinate employees within their units together, in one location, thus streamlining the human resource decision-making process, and allowing managers to more easily balance their human resource responsibilities with other day-to-day demands.

With quick, easy access to personnel information, managers can make decisions on budgets, staffing plans, and manage work distribution within their units. Another bonus feature in My Workplace is the ability to monitor the status of "in-process" personnel actions in the human resources system.

The use of My Biz and My Workplace requires a user ID and password. Employees can log into My Biz by accessing the Army CPOL Portal <http://www.cpol.army.mil> using their AKO user ID and password. Once in CPOL, employees should click on the Employee Tab, and then select "Open" next to "Access to My Biz".

Here you will find access to My Biz; My Biz Helpdesk where you create and view you tickets; My Biz Field Descriptions, and a My Biz User Guidance site. Employees without DCPDS accounts can log in using their social security number as their ID. Guidance on how to establish a password and navigate

within My Biz and the Portal Helpdesk is located at <http://cpol.army.mil/library/general/myBIZ0306.ppt>

For supervisors to access My Workplace, they must have access to the DoD Civilian Personnel Data System (DCPDS) and can request their initial User ID/password from their servicing CPAC.

After logging into either Website you will be prompted to change your password. For additional information or assistance, please contact your servicing CPAC.

It is extremely important that employees, supervisors and managers review and update personnel/ personal information in these new HR modules to ensure that the data base contains the most accurate and up-to-date information, especially in light of the upcoming transition to the new NSPS. Employees are urged to make necessary changes or submit on-line "ticket requests" to the Civilian Personnel Operations Center (CPOC) for correction of data.

The Civilian Human Resources Agency has prepared a video that will teach you more about My Biz and My Workplace. Go to the CHRA Web site at www.chra.army.mil

- Scroll down and select "How-to Movies (ScreenCams)" to log into the tool.

- Choose the video "Logging into the Appraisal Tool".

- Videos have accompanying step-by-step guides that should be printed and used as a reference when viewing the video.

- Scripts for the videos are also available for those without audio capability.

Around the Corps

ERDC supercomputer

The large memory and fast, numerous processors of ERDC's Cray XT3 supercomputer were just what the Air Force Research Laboratory needed to study complex electromagnetic problems.

Air Force scientists needed to simulate new antenna designs and electromagnetic field interaction problems. Once the antenna simulations are validated, modeling can be used to assess various antenna configurations without costly construction and experiments.

The Air Force Research Lab has developed an electromagnetic finite difference time domain code TMax (Temporal Maxwell solver) for DoD application. TMax is a robust solver that harnesses massive parallel and vector processing, providing a powerful electromagnetic modeling tool.

The first attempt at running TMax on the Cray XT3 was completely successful. Fifteen billion cells on 1,000 processors ran in four hours for one test. Nearly every 1,000-processor run was successful. If needed, 30 billion TMax cells will fit onto 1,000 processors, or 60 billion on 2,000 processors.

ERDC's Scientific Visualization Center aided by producing animations of how electromagnetic fields interact with solid objects.

Fort Wainwright

The end of the fiscal year is not the best time to get a rush project, but with teamwork and cooperation, it's not impossible. Fort Wainwright, Alaska, needed large scale maintenance to its switchgear and breaker system at the power plant, and provision of a backup power source before winter. The Installation Management Agency contacted the Engineering & Support Center, Huntsville to manage the project.

Work started on the \$409,000 project in June with a deadline of Oct. 1.

"The project went smoothly," said Pat Driscoll, Chief of Utilities for Public Works at Fort Wainwright. "Huntsville Center was wonderful to work with; I was impressed with the professionalism of John (Trudell) and Mark (Allen)."

The power plant was operational before, during, and after the repairs, Driscoll said. "This maintenance provides us the reliability to get through harsh weather."

"Everybody pulled together to make it happen," said John Trudell, project manager with the Facilities Repair & Renewal Program at Huntsville Center. "Everyone working on the project executed their part quickly and competently. If it weren't for every one of them, we couldn't have met the deadline. Contracting did their part to get the contracts and mods out. Resource Management obligated and approved funds. The Engineering Directorate's Electrical Branch wrote the scope of work and provided technical expertise. GVEA and Ameresco mobilized and accomplished a great deal in a short time."

Structures removed

A public sealed bid sale at Fort Huachuca Aug. 25-26 removed seven unneeded structures at no cost to the installation.

"It worked well," said Paul Kays, the Installation Facilities & Space Utilization Officer with Fort Huachuca's Directorate of Public Works (DPW). "All the major buildings we wanted to get rid of, we got rid of. The sale helped us meet our goals for reducing some of the old structures."

Fort Huachuca DPW worked with the Engineering & Support Center, Huntsville, and Los Angeles District. Huntsville Center's Facilities Reduction Program (FRP) helps installations find the best way to remove unneeded structures. Huntsville Center

provided the funds and the on-site engineer organized the sale.

"The original budget request to remove these facilities using conventional methods was \$156,000," said Michael Norton, the FRP program manager. "We looked at it in our Best Practices Toolbox at <https://frptoolbox.erd.usace.army.mil/frptoolbox/index.cfm> and the answer was to allow the public to bid on them.

"The people who showed up were enthusiastic," said Nancy Mehaffie, project manager from LA District. "One guy bought four or five buildings. He plans to share them with his neighbors. One building is a trailer that is going to Tombstone to be used in a recreational vehicle park. We thought it would be hard to get rid of because of its age. The bidder got it for \$10 and he will pay to have it hauled off."

International Lineman's Rodeo

Three Soldiers from the 249th Engineer Battalion (Prime Power) climbed their way to second place at the 23rd annual International Lineman's Rodeo & Expo in Bonner Springs, Kan., on Oct. 7.

Staff Sgt. Jason Anderson, Staff Sgt. Mark Jaminet, and Sgt. Dale Buchanan, all from Alpha Company at Fort Lewis, Wash., competed in the military division of the rodeo, which drew more than 200 teams.

A team of instructors from the Transmission and Distribution School at Sheppard Air Force Base, Texas, took first, and an Air Force team placed third.

Two Reserve teams of the 249th Engineer Battalion, both from Attleboro, Mass., also competed and placed sixth and seventh.

The competition was four events — the Pole Climb; the Hurt-man Rescue (simulating rescuing a buddy from a 40-foot pole); the Double End Dead event, simulating reconnecting a live power line; and a Switch Change Out event. The events are timed and deductions for mistakes, such as dropping a tool or safety violations, are subtracted from 100 for the team score.

Anderson said the team realized that lineman work is not their specialty, so they are happy with their second place finish. "The rodeo was great. Linemen are big military supporters — the whole experience was incredible."

"We don't get a lot of experience on overhead (power transmission)," Buchanan said. "We had the chance to talk with a lot of the experienced linemen — some of them have 30 or 40 years of experience — and we learned faster and safer ways of doing some things. We picked their brains for a lot of things and at the end of the day they wanted us to hang out with them. It was a real good learning experience."

The Lineman's Rodeo attracts the best linemen from around the world to compete in events based on traditional lineman tasks and skills. This year the rodeo attracted more than 200 teams and 250 apprentices, divided into five civilian divisions and a military division. This was the second year the 249th has sent a team — last year a team from Fort Bragg, N.C., competed and placed third.

Mississippi River Commission

Four members of the Mississippi River Commission (MRC) have been appointed by President George

W. Bush. Brig. Gen. Robert Crear, commander of Mississippi Valley Division, was appointed to serve as president. Commission members Brig. Gen. Bruce Berwick, Rear Adm. Samuel DeBow Jr., and Brig. Gen. Gregg Martin also pledged their service to the U.S. as commission members.

An MRC member is nominated and appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate.

The commission was created by an Act of Congress on June 28, 1879 to plan and provide improvement of the entire Mississippi River. This includes improving navigation, preventing floods, and facilitating commerce. The presidential appointees are three officers from the Corps, a representative from the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration, and three civilians, two of whom must be civil engineers.

The remaining members of the MRC include Sam Angel of Lake Village, Ark., R.D. James (civil engineer) of New Madrid, Mo., and William Clifford Smith (civil engineer) of Houma, La. They are civilian members appointed by the President.

Correction

The name of Salah Hadi Obid was misspelled in the caption of his photo in the October edition of *Engineer Update*.

National Congress of American Indians

For the first time, USACE played a substantial role at the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) by participating in their annual conference. USACE participated in three ways:

USACE booth. The booth displayed photos of our work with the Pyramid Lake Paiute and the Tribes of the Missouri River. The booth drew a number of visitors, including Native American business and advocacy groups, noted author Oren Lyons (Seneca), and Olympian runner Billy Mills (Oglala Sioux).

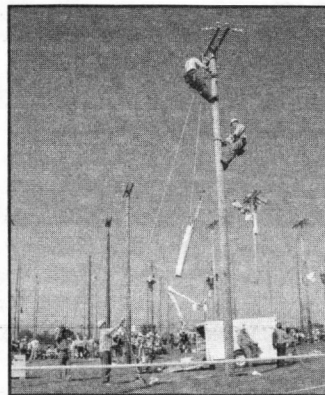
Presentations. The Corps presented project results before NCAI subcommittees. The first presentation, before the Human, Religious, and Cultural Concerns Subcommittee, titled "Missouri River Programmatic Agreement on Compliance with Section of 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act."

The second presentation was before the Environmental Protection and Land Use Subcommittee, and was titled "Pyramid Lake Paiute Environmental Restoration Program." The presentation detailed the partnership between the Corps and the tribe to clean up unexploded ordnance in Pyramid Lake and restore fisheries.

Address by Brig. Gen. Joseph Schroedel. Schroedel is the former commander of South Pacific Division, and current commander of South Atlantic Division. He talked about the Corps' Tribal Nations program and our willingness to engage in pre-decision consultation. He stressed our acknowledgement of tribal sovereignty and our commitment to the trust responsibility. He talked briefly about the status of the WRDA bill and some of its provisions.

New CRREL director

Dr. Robert Davis is the new Director of the Cold Regions Research & Engineering Laboratory (CRREL). As director, Davis will lead the lab's programs in basic and applied engineering, focusing on a wide range of science and technology to solve environmental physics and cold regions engineering problems to support the warfighter, water resources, environment, infrastructure, and homeland security.



The International Lineman's Rodeo & Expo drew more than 200 teams.

Public safety

Continued from page one
reduction by the end of FY08.

Numbers increasing

That push for reducing public fatalities is needed, because the number of deaths in water recreation is slowly increasing.

"Our percentages, the number of deaths compared to number of recreation hours, are still very low," said Nutt. "But our raw numbers are ticking up because the number of people coming to our water projects is increasing, and they spend more hours there. In a way, I guess the increased fatalities are an unintended consequence of the Corps' success in providing good, safe, family-oriented water recreation. People enjoy our water projects, and more people are coming to us and spending more time. Obviously, we must keep providing the safest water recreation."

Surprisingly, the fatality reduction initiative is somewhat controversial.

Front-line troops

"This is an unfunded mandate," said Nutt. "There is no resistance to reducing public fatalities; that's not the issue. The issue is that our recreation program managers are already working with limited resources. No one is saying, 'Here's a blank check, now step up your water safety efforts.' So management will have to include water safety in their priorities and find low-cost, innovative ways to increase their emphasis on public safety."

The Corps National Water Safety Program will also have to be clever about assisting in the effort. Fortunately, they have a lot of resources to work with.

"The park rangers are our front-line troops in this effort," said Stephen Austin, senior policy advisor for Park Ranger Programs. "They're the Corps employees who have that face-to-face opportunity with the visitors, so they're the best ones to carry the water safety message. Our rangers are some of the most creative, positive people we have."

The Corps leadership got to see their rangers in action when 10 of them came to Washington, DC to present water safety presentations in Headquarters and at the Corps Day picnic.

The rangers demonstrated and practiced their expertise in talking to all age groups from the Tiny Findings Day Care Center to adults walking down the hall. Their equipment ranged from Buddy Beaver and Seamount Safety, the water safety sea dragon, to age-appropriate water safety videos, coloring books, and stick-on water safety tattoos.

"This gives us a chance to practice public education," said Abigail Clark, a park ranger at New England District's Cape Cod Canal. "We get more time to talk to folks here than when they're busy out on the beach."

"Education is the most important thing about events like this," said Danielle Huffman, a park ranger at Baltimore District's Cape Cod Canal. "We have to promote water safety because so many of the public are not



A Corps park ranger checks a family's flotation gear before they put their boat in the water. (Photo courtesy of the USACE National Operations Center for Water Safety)

aware of the danger that exists on or near the water."

Cyberspace

The park rangers and other safety personnel plan to use cyberspace in their effort to reduce public fatalities.

"That ties into the Learning Organization effort of sharing ideas across the whole Corps of Engineers," said Eugene Goff, lead park ranger at The Dalles John Day Willow Creek Project in Portland District. He is currently in Headquarters in a career assignment program. "We're starting to see that communication improve between divisions."

"Mostly we'll turn to tools that are already available," said Nutt. "Obviously, e-mail is a wonderful way to network and exchange ideas."

"We've recently been using a program called Groove," Nutt continued. "It's a software program that offers great tools, such as discussion boards, large document capacity and editing functions. It enhances the group experience and supports idea exchange. It's been the design/development platform for several water safety projects in the National Water Safety Program, including exhibit design and bilingual translations."

"Groove is just one example of a great communication tool," said Nutt. "Among the park rangers we also use a network we call InterpNet, managed by Kevin Ewbank, a park ranger in Rock Island District. InterpNet is an exchange site designed for park rangers who are working on interpretive programs. Ewbank also manages RangerNet, a similar distribution list where ideas can be exchanged. Plus the NRM Gateway Web site has been hugely successful in sharing information through a site feature called 'Good Enough To Share.'"

Word-of-mouth

"These are just a few of the technological tools that our staffs are leveraging for public safety," said Nutt. "And don't discount word-of-mouth. Whether idea sharing involves park staff or division commanders, it's effective when those ideas filter down to the ranger

talking to visitors at the boat ramp."

"We encourage networking at conferences," said Nutt. "For instance, the International Boating and Water Safety Summit is a valuable water safety conference that we encourage Corps park rangers and managers to attend and participate in idea exchange. That type of meeting is an opportunity to network with people in other federal agencies and organizations who are all working toward saving lives on public recreational and navigational waterways."

Bilingual challenges

Nutt admits that all of these efforts are needed, because there are always new challenges in water safety.

"For us in the national program, the most recent challenge has been in multilingual communication," said Nutt. "For instance, the number of Hispanic visitors to our lakes is increasing. As the numbers of non-English speaking visitors increase, we're also experiencing an increase in drownings involving those ethnic groups. Often we find that's because of unfamiliarity with the risks of open waters and a lack of means of communicating effectively."

"As a result, I feel a huge responsibility to improve our educational outreach," said Nutt. "I've relied heavily on a bilingual support team of Corps employees; this group does a great job of assisting me in the water safety program. Outside the water safety arena, the bilingual team sees the benefits of communicating with that same visitor that I'm trying to reach to teach them more about the Corps, or inform them about our volunteer program, or the safety regulations in our park, or even simple visitor information like the location of the nearest phone or water fountain or restroom."

"The big challenge has been dealing with the many Spanish dialects, because we're trying to create one product to get the economies of scale that a national program offers," said Nutt.

Carbon monoxide

Another growing challenge in the water safety effort is the increasing

number of carbon monoxide poisoning incidents. These are usually fatalities where drowning might be the cause of death, but carbon monoxide was a major contributing factor.

"We've had six carbon monoxide poisonings on Corps lakes since Memorial Day," said Nutt. "It may have been a problem in the past, but we just weren't aware of it. We've become more conscious that carbon monoxide is an issue as we're seeing it diagnosed more often in autopsies of victims who died in our waters."

"Some states have taken a pro-active stance against carbon monoxide by banning teak surfing, where someone hangs onto the teak diving step and is pulled along behind the boat," said Goff. "And the industry standards for houseboats have been re-evaluated, because that's where a lot of carbon monoxide poisonings occurred. Even when the engine was off, the houseboat's generator was shooting exhaust into the space under the swim platform on the back of the houseboat. Kids and adults would dive under and come up into that air space, and it was full of carbon monoxide."

Dangerous toys

"And there always seems to be a lot of toys out there that push people to extreme behavior, like the tube kites that have just been banned at some of our lakes," said Nutt. "Or self-propelled skis powered by something like a trolling motor. And parasailing. Parasailing has been around a long time, but we're seeing more and more people participating in that activity."

The basics

Each Corps division will have a raw-number goal to target in the fatality reduction effort. Larger divisions with more water projects will have a larger goal number than smaller, dryer divisions, which reflects the higher number of public fatalities that have occurred on their lakes. But what if a Corps water project has had zero fatalities? How does the Public Fatality Reduction Initiative affect them?

"We've never had fatalities at our project, but does that mean we can slack off?" asked Huffman. "No! If we knew there would be a fatality tomorrow, we would be out there working hard on education and prevention. But you can't plan for these things, so we have to work on water safety just as hard as anyone else."

The Corps' water safety experts agree that it all comes down to the basics.

"About 90 percent of the drowning victims at Corps projects were not wearing their life jackets," said Goff. "I like to put it this way — wear your life jacket, wear your life jacket, wear your life jacket! And know your limits, and all the water safety education that we learned as children — learn to swim, have someone watch you, don't get out there by yourself. If people would just practice the rules of the road, things that we all know, we wouldn't have the drownings that we're seeing out there."